

Braised Pork Shoulder in Chianti Sauce

By Eric Guido

Note: If you have access to a boar roast, you can easily substitute it for the pork shoulder. In that case, look for a 4 – 5 pound roast. Also, this recipe can be made the same day as your dinner or the day before.

6 ½ - 8 lbs. pork shoulder roast
1 ½ bottles Chianti (Don't cook with it if it isn't something you wouldn't mind drinking.)
3 cups chicken stock
1 cup water
7 oz. olive oil, divided
8 oz. pancetta (small dice)
2 yellow onions (small dice)
5 stalks celery (fibrous layer peeled off)
3 carrots (peeled and cut into a small dice or shredded)
1 can San Marzano plum tomatoes, 28 oz. (Crush the tomatoes before using.)
10 cloves
2 – 3 sprigs rosemary
3 tbs. unsalted butter
all-purpose flour (as needed)
salt and pepper

Prepare and measure all ingredients. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

Trim the pork shoulder of any unnecessary fat or silver skin. Liberally sprinkle it all over with salt and pepper. Next, roll the pork shoulder in flour. Use as much flour as necessary to coat the entire cut of meat, but shake loose any extra.

In a large-gauge roasting pan, pour in 5 oz (a little over a ¼ cup) of olive oil. Place the pan across two burners on your stove and turn the heat up to medium-high. Once the oil is shimmering, place the pork shoulder into the pan. The idea is to get a good sear, so fend off the urge to touch it once you put it down. When the first side is seared, turn it over to the other side and repeat until all sides have been seared.

While searing the pork shoulder, place a sauté pan over a medium flame, pour the other 2 oz. of olive oil and allow to heat through. Then add the pancetta and cook until the fat has been rendered and the pancetta appears to have a crisp to it (think bacon). Then, remove the pancetta from the pan but leave the oil in. Check the pan to make sure there are no burned pieces left in the bottom. If there are, remove and discard them before continuing. Now add the onions, celery, carrots and cloves with a generous pinch of salt, and stir to coat the contents of the pan with oil. Allow this mixture to cook over a medium-low flame, stirring from time to time, until the onions have turned translucent.

Returning your attention to the pork shoulder, once you have an even sear on all sides, begin to add the Chianti, one cup at a time. Stop around three cups, and allow the Chianti to start boiling. At this time, keep adding the remaining Chianti, a cup at a time. Once it has all been added, bring the wine up to a boil for 2 – 3 minutes.

Next, add the vegetables from the sauté pan--as well as the can of San Marzano plum tomatoes, rosemary, chicken stock and the water--into the roasting pan, and spread the contents evenly. Allow this mixture to come up to a boil and then remove from the burners. Cover the roasting pan with aluminum foil and place in the oven. Allow to cook for two hours and then loosen the foil on the pan (to allow some steam to escape) and cook for another hour.

Once the braise is done, carefully remove the pork shoulder from the pan and cover with aluminum foil. Pour the remaining contents of the pan through a sieve and to separate the sauce from the solids. Massage (but do not crush) the solids to release as much juice as possible.

Pour the sauce into a saucepan and place over a medium flame (uncovered). Allow the sauce to come up to a gentle boil. Continue to reduce the sauce like this for an hour, making sure to regularly skim and discard the fat and impurities that rise to the surface.

At this time, turn off the flame and stir in the 3 tbs. of butter until completely combined. Taste the sauce and season with salt and pepper as necessary.

Now, you can choose to slice the pork shoulder and ladle the sauce on top to serve. Alternatively, you can allow the sauce to cool and then place the pork shoulder back into the sauce and hold it for the following day, which does add a level of richness to the sauce and flavor to the meat. If you do this, simply slice the shoulder the following day and warm it in the sauce in a sauté pan. Or, you can shred the meat, add it back into the sauce and use this as a ragu to pour over pasta.